

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /068 W
-----130200Z 045527 /13

R 120315Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1205
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN
COMODEASTFOR

S E C R E T SANA 1801

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MILI, PFOR, YE, UR
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ALHAMDI ON YEMENI ARMED FORCES

BEGIN SUMMARY. PRESIDENT AL-AHMDI DURING MAY 9 TALK
DESCRIBED YEMEN'S CONTINUING NEED TO MODERNIZE ITS ARMED
FORCES PARTICULARLY THE AIR FORCE. IN LATTER CONNECTION
HE CATEGORICALLY DENIED MIG 21S WOULD BE DELIVERED TO YEMEN,
ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED MIG 17S WOULD COME AS PART OF OLD
SOVIET/YEMENI AGREEMENT. AT SAME TIME AL-HAMDI ASKED
FOR STATUS OF SAUDI REQUEST FOR F-5S FOR YEMENI AIR FORCE.
I TOLD HIM THAT US REPLY TO SAUDI REQUEST STILL UNDER
ADVISEMENT. HE HOPED FOR EARLY RESPONSE. THUS FAR
AL-HAMDI HAS TWICE TOLD ME MIG 21S NOT RPT NOT ARRIVING
BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT IF AMERICAN OR OTHER WESTERN
SOURCES NOT FORTCHOMING HE WILL NOT BE PREPARED TO SOVIETS.
END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING MAY 9 TALK, PRESIDENT ALAHAMDI DISCUSSED WITH ME
THE CURRENT STATE OF THE YEMENI ARMED FORCES. AL-AHMDI
EMPHASIZED THAT DESPITE MUCH APPRECIATED ASSISTANCE FROM
THE SAUDIS, THESE FORCES STILL NEED MUCH IN THE WAY OF
MODERNIZATION AND RE-TRAINING, PARTICULARLY IN THE AIR
FORCE WHICH HE SAID FOR YEMEN IS A "SENSITIVE" MATTER.
IN THIS LATTER REGARD, HE NOTED THAT PDRY AND SOMALIA HAVE

BEEN PROVIDED WITH MODERN SOVIET EQUIPMENT ESPECIALLY THEIR RESPECTIVE AIR FORCES. THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED THAT NOW ETHIOPIA HAS ALSO BECOME THE RECIPIENT OF SOVIET EQUIPMENT. THESE DEVELOPMENTS DEEPLY CONCERN YEMEN BECAUSE IT CONSIDERS ITSELF VULNERABLE AS A RESULT OF THE MODERATE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICIES IT HAS BEEN FOLLOWING OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN TO THE LIKING OF THE SOVIETS AND THEIR LOCAL FRIENDS.

2. WHEN I ASKED PRESIDENT ALAHMADI ABOUT THE RUMORS GOING AROUND SANA THAT MIG 21S WOULD SOON BE DELIVERED TO YEMENI AIR FORCE, PRESIDENT LAUGHINGLY REJOINED THERE ARE ALSO RUMORS THAT YEMEN WILL BE GETTING THE ATOMIC BOMB. HE CONTINUED MORE SERIOUSLY BY REPLYING NOT ONCE BUT TWICE THAT YEMEN WILL NOT RPT NOT BE OBTAINING ANY MIG 21S BUT RATHER UNDER TERMS OF OLD AGREEMENTS SIGNED WITH SOVIET UNION BEFORE HE ASSUMED OFFICE MIG 17S WILL BE EVENTUALLY DELIVERED.

3. THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN DRAGGING THEIR FEET IN PROVIDING THE YEMENI AIR FORCE WITH SPARE PARTS FOR THE PRESENT MIG 17S IN THE YEMENI AIR FORCE INVENTORY WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS IN VERY BAD CONDITION. HE SAID THAT RECENTLY THESE PLANES NEEDED RUBBER TIRES AND THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT ASKED THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT SEVERAL TIMES FOR THIS ITEM WITH THE SOVIETS DELAYING THEIR REPLY UNTIL ONLY A FEW WEEKS AGO. ALTHOUGH A POSITIVE REPLY WAS FINALLY GIVEN, THE YEMENIS WERE REQUIRED TO SEND ONE OF THEIR OWN PLANES TO MOSCOW TO PICK UP THE TIRES.

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4. AL-AHMDI SAID THAT IT WAS TACTICS LIKE THESE WHICH MADE THE MATTER OF OBTAINING AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR THE AIR FORCE A CRITICAL ISSUE. AT THE SAME TIME THE SOVIET ADVISORS REMAINING IN THE AIR FORCE TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO FAN THE DISCONTENT OF THE PILOTS OVER THE AIR FORCE'S LACK OF NEW AIRCRAFT.

5. THE PRESIDENT THEN ASKED ME WHAT THE STATUS OF THE SAUDI REQUEST FOR PRICE AND AVAILABILITY DATA ON THE F-5S WAS. I TOLD HIM THE MATTER WAS STILL UNDER STUDY AND THAT I HOPED A REPLY WOULD BE AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. AL-HAMDI OBSERVED THAT HE REALIZES THE USG DOES NOT WISH TO ENGAGE IN ARMS RACES AROUND THE WORLD BUT AT THE SAME TIME THE USG IS UNDER OBLIGATIONS TO HELP ITS FRIENDS FACE THREATS COMING TO THEM FROM EXTREMIST NEIGHBORS. AL-HAMDI NOTED THIS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD WHERE THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE SPECIAL EFFORTS TO ENTRENCH THEMSELVES IN PDY, IN SOMALIA AND NOW IN ETHIOPIA. AL-HAMDI STRESSED

THAT YEMEN ONLY WANTS ARMS TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM THE THREAT
OF EXTREMISM WHICH HE REMINDED ME ONLY SEVERAL YEARS AGO
TOOK THE FORM OF INVASION OF YEMEN FROM THE SOUTH. AL-HAMDI
CONCLUDED BY HOPING THAT THE USG WOULD GIVE A FAVORABLE REPLY
TO THE SAUDI REQUEST FOR F-5S FOR EVENTUAL DELIVERY TO THE
YEMENI AIR FORCE.

6. COMMENT: AL-HAMDI'S CATEGORIC STATEMENT THAT NO MIG 21S
ARE COMING IS CONFIRMATION OF WHAT HE HAS TOLD ME IN PAST.
THIS DOES NOT MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT SHOULD HE FAIL TO
LINE UP A WESTERN OR AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE, HE WILL REFRAIN
FROM TURNING AGAIN TO THE SOVIETS FOR THE MIG 21S.

SCOTES

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, MILITARY EQUIPMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MILITARY CAPABILITIES
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Document Number: 1977SANA01801
Document Source: CORE
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Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Format: TEL
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Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2547466
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT ALHAMDY ON YEMENI ARMED FORCES BEGIN SUMMARY. PRESIDENT AL-AHMDY DURING MAY 9 TALK DESCRIBED YEMEN'S CONTINUING NEED TO MODERNIZE ITS
TAGS: MASS, MILI, PFOR, YE, UR, (AL-HAMDI, IBRAHIM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/08cdb695-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009